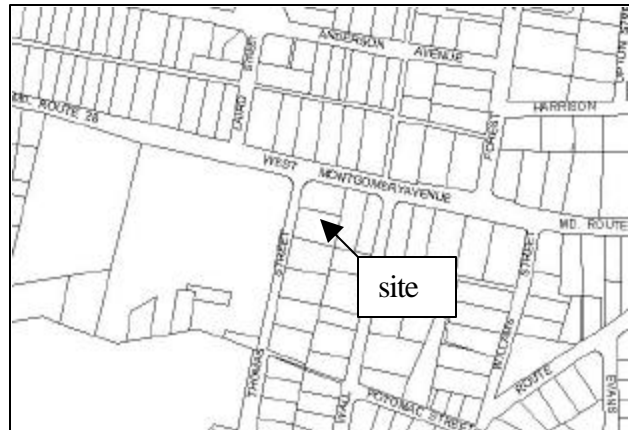


**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

**June 19, 2001
MEETING NO. 01-06**

APPLICATION: HDC01-0195
DATE FILED: May 29, 2001
APPLICANT: Alex Daskalakis
ADDRESS: 8 Thomas Street



PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:

The 2 ½-story frame house faces west on Thomas Street, toward the grounds of Chestnut Lodge. The house was constructed in 1906 and is in the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District. The west (front) façade has a gabled dormer with a pair of 6 over 6 double sash windows. There is one window in each of the three second-story bays, and in the north and south first-story bays. A full-width front porch has a low-hipped seamed tin roof supported by four square columns. A two-story addition was built in 1994 on the south side. The original lot was subdivided in 1993. The northern lot at the corner of Thomas Street and West Montgomery Avenue was sold and a new house (6 Thomas Street) is currently under construction there.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS AT THIS ADDRESS:

HDC93-0037 House addition, approved 11/16/93

REQUEST:

The applicant requests a Certificate of Approval to remove two norway spruce trees in the front yard that overhang the house. The Applicant states that the trees are overgrowing the house, blocking light to the interior, allowing animals access to the roof, and trapping moisture around the porch. He also feels that the trees have a negative effect on the aesthetics of the house.



STAFF COMMENTS:

The City Forester inspected the trees and notes that they are fairly healthy. The tree to the right of the house could have a structural defect. He does not recommend removal unless the applicant is encountering problems due to the trees' proximity (within 12 feet) to the house.

- 1. Historic, archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.*

This American Foursquare was constructed in 1906 by members of the Beard family. It was purchased in 1926 by Raleigh Chinn whose family occupied it for more than 40 years. The house is representative of the transitional architecture of the early 20th century. Features from both the late Victorian/Queen Anne and the newer Colonial Revival/American Foursquare architecture were incorporated in this structure.

2. *The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area.*

The spruce trees were likely planted as a landscape feature to frame the house's symmetrical front facade from the street. The trees have outgrown this framing function and are no longer fulfilling their original intention. The trees are less than 12 feet from the house which is much closer than the recommended 20 to 30 foot distance for large trees.

3. *The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.*

Not applicable.

4. *To any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the Commission deems to be pertinent.*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff reluctantly recommends removal of the two evergreens as they have outgrown their function of framing the house and are causing problems for the owner, including blocking light, allowing animal access to the roof and attic, and trapping moisture around the front porch. It is always difficult to recommend removal of large, prominent trees as they often do contribute to the historic character of a neighborhood. However, mature trees should not be denied removal solely because of their size and prominence, especially those that have outgrown their original purpose. The HDC review of mature tree removal is intended to primarily to preserve streetscapes in the historic districts, especially the large trees that overhang the streets.

The tree on the south side of this property is not a specimen tree as most of the lower branches on one side have been removed and it has a poor shape. The tree on the north side is a better specimen but appears to be leaning slightly toward the house. Further pruning of the trees as a way of alleviating problems would likely impair the appearance of the trees. Staff does not think that the specimen value of these trees warrants retention in this case when the owner feels strongly that retention is not in the best interest of his property and he is willing to replace them with more appropriate trees. There are many mature trees in the rear yard of this property and it is possible that by removing these two evergreens, the vista to other significant trees will be revealed.

Staff recommends removal of both trees and replacement with ornamental trees to fulfill the original intention of framing the house.